Bird Plague

William Ford

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.5854
WILLIAM FORD

*Bird Plague*

That’s what they are, starlings,  
Beaks like snub-nosed hypodermics  
Unearthing the ground  
To the high-pitched outrage  
Of nuthatch and junco,  
The great winter athletes.  
At dusk the whole sky darkens  
Above our downtown.

Even the flicker won’t fight  
But rages from the suet wire  
If but one of these thugs  
Muscles in—five, now,  
Flapping crudely, head to head,  
Meaner than anything  
Even to themselves.

In winter, drops of old gold  
Show through on their flat black coats  
Sucking up the very sun,  
Their numbers increasing so much  
We debate continuing the feeders.

Not Americans at all, these birds,  
But flapping Elizabethan icons  
Shipped here because some gull thought  
We needed all of Shakespeare’s kind  
To become more fully civilized,  
No matter the character.